

Hualapai Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Early Childhood

ADVOCACY KIT



“We want children to thrive, be safe, healthy and educated.”

-Hualapai Tribe Regional Partnership Council Vice Chair

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FIRST THINGS FIRST – ISSUE BRIEF

“When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productive and responsible citizenship.”

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child

In November 2006, in a statistical landslide, Arizona voters passed Proposition 203 - a citizen's initiative that supports a system for high quality early childhood education, development, and health services. With its passage, the Proposition created a new state level board known as the Arizona Early Childhood Development & Health Board. The Board subsequently adopted the name First Things First as an uplifting reference to the voter-enacted initiative, and to exemplify the importance of early childhood. First Things First created a new, dedicated revenue stream for children birth through five through a tobacco tax. These dollars are used to ensure that all children have the tools they need to be ready to succeed. This initiative also empowered Arizona Federally Recognized Tribes to decide how they want to take advantage of the funds that are available to help children birth through five within their tribal communities. Each Arizona Tribe had the opportunity to establish their own Regional Partnership Council located on their tribal lands or stay within a designated region.

As the legislature and Governor contemplate a budget shortfall this year, using FTF fund balances may be considered an easy way to address the state's multi-billion dollar deficit. Though FTF statutory language prohibits supplanting with its funds, the legislature can access FTF accumulated funds in 2009 in one of two ways:

- At least 45 members of the House, 23 members of the Senate, and the governor vote to take the funds; or
- A referendum is referred by the legislature for public vote in a special election and receives a majority of the votes cast.

FACTS ABOUT EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Early Child Development is the first and essential step toward achieving primary school completion. Early childhood is the most rapid period of development in a human life. Although individual children develop at their own pace, all children progress through an identifiable sequence of physical, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. The Early Child Development approach is based on the proven fact that young children respond best when caregivers use techniques designed to encourage and stimulate progress to the next level of development.

The ultimate goal of Early Child Development (ECD) programs is to improve young children's capacity to develop and learn. A child who is ready for school has a combination of positive characteristics: he or she is socially and emotionally healthy, confident, and friendly; has good peer relationships; tackles challenging tasks and persists with them; has good language skills and communicates well; and listens to instructions and is attentive. The positive effects ECD programs have can change the development trajectory of children by the time they enter school. A child who is ready for school has less chances of repeating a grade, being placed in special education, or being a school drop-out. This is especially critical for Native American communities with respect to the American Indian and Alaska Native drop-out rate. The National Center for Education Statistics (1989) reports that American Indian and Alaska Native students have a dropout rate twice the national average; the highest dropout rate of any United States ethnic or racial group reported. About three out of every ten Native students drop out of school before graduating from high school both on reservations and in cities.

Did you know?

- Nearly 90% of the core structure of the brain develops in the first three years of life. This “wiring” impacts the capacity to learn and develop social, emotional and cognitive skills. —www.futureofchildren.org
- Identifying and helping children who have special needs at least 2 years before they enter kindergarten can produce savings of \$30,000 to \$100,000 per child.
—*Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention, Second Edition, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press*
- Studies have found a 95% correlation between children's language interaction with adults in the first two to three years of life and their reading level in 4th grade.
—[Pre-K NOW](#)

- Children acquire the foundation for desirable business skills such as communication, teamwork and critical thinking before age 5.

—www.futureofchildren.org

- Children who participate in developmentally appropriate early childhood learning programs are more likely to graduate from high school and get a job.

—www.fpg.unc.edu

- Every dollar invested in high quality early childhood programs may yield \$7-\$9 in future savings.

—www.nieer.org

“Parents are the first teachers.”

-Hualapai Tribe Regional Partnership Council Member

WHAT IMPACT DOES FIRST THINGS FIRST HAVE IN ARIZONA'S TRIBAL COMMUNITIES?

As a result of Proposition 203:

- Ten (10) Arizona Tribes have elected to form their own regions. These tribal regions are prepared to administer over 60 strategies across the state that will implement and enhance early childhood development and health programs in tribal communities.
- The unique partnership forged between First Things First and Arizona Tribes, on behalf of early childhood issues, upholds and strengthens Tribal sovereignty.
- The First Things First model, serves as a model for state - tribe relations that provides Tribal autonomy.
- Arizona's Tribal lands are often located in very isolated rural areas where early care and education services are not readily available. First Things First places crucial early childhood development services where they are most critical.
- First Things First dollars will establish over 20 new early childhood development, health and prevention programs in Arizona Tribal communities.
- The funding will provide new primary prevention activities such as physical fitness programs, developmental delay screenings, parent education activities, and other innovative programs targeting young children and their care givers.
- A loss or decline in funding would be devastating and even more costly, because all the gains made with current funding will be lost, and the costs of increased expenses for short term solutions to early care, health, and education will continue to increase at even greater rates for individuals, families, communities, health programs and staff and the nation.

HOW TO BECOME AN EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVOCATE

Call to Action: Please get involved!

Below are several things you and your community can do to support the First Things First funded Early Childhood Development strategies and across the state. Please join our CALL TO ACTION.

- Call or visit your Tribal Leaders and ask them to voice their support of First Things First with the State Legislature and request that they make early childhood development and health issues a priority of the Tribe.
- Visit your State legislator's field staff – right in your local area.
- Call your State Legislators.
- Email, Fax or Mail a letter to your tribal leaders and state representatives.

What Should You Say?

If you are calling or visiting:

- First, thank them for speaking/meeting with you.
- Briefly share the importance of the First Things First initiative for children in your community.
- State the following request:

Please support the success of our children by supporting the sustainability of Arizona First Things First. This endeavor provides our tribal community with the knowledge and resources to implement early care, education and health programs that were designed by the community to address the most pressing issues facing children ages zero to five.

- Emphasize that this investment will provide a greater return on investment through a long term decreased spending in other areas such as remedial education, clinical treatment and crime.
- Ask your representative or staff if you can count on their support.
- Remember to send a follow-up thank you letter, briefly restating your request.

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR TRIBAL LEADERS

The most effective way a citizen can directly influence tribal public policy is to meet with their Tribal Leaders (or his or her staff).

It is important to involve Tribal Governments in advocacy efforts because:

- Tribes are sovereign nations and have the ability to interact with other government representatives on a government to government level.
- Tribal leaders most likely have interacted frequently with their state representatives and thus have developed a strong working relationship and rapport with them.

Tribal protocol requires behavior that demonstrates humility, respect, the awareness that all things are connected, and that our individual and group behaviors can help and hurt current efforts to solve community problems. Tribal values emphasize family/clan/group/Tribe, not the self or individual as in contemporary mainstream society. When working with Tribal leaders it is important to present issues within the context of a group's greater good. Questions are best framed in a manner that conveys awareness that the "family" (or greater whole) may be affected, positively or negatively by the answer. For example, when asking Tribal leaders to participate in an advisory capacity (or give input in a decision-making process) it is best to ask for the "help and advice that will help impact the wellbeing and future of Tribal youth within the community".

When conducting a meeting with a tribal leader(s), one should approach their role as though they were leading a family gathering, making sure every individual is acknowledged, and that the group discussion and decision process is conducted in a respectful and harmonious manner, with an emphasis on ensuring the entire group benefits from each individual that is present.

Here are tips that may help encourage support and trust among Tribal Leaders:

- Demonstrate respect for Elders, Tribal Leaders, elected Tribal Leaders, and Spiritual Leaders by acknowledging and appreciating their roles in the community and seeking their advice as experts of the community;
- Schedule meetings and events around meals, and impart the sense of importance of eating together combined with community sharing. This is a good time to recognize individuals new to the community, and to praise an individual or organization's recent success.

- Model a spirit of cross-cultural collaboration by including and recognizing the efforts of both Tribal and non-Tribal entities throughout your meeting or event.
- Although statistics and evidence are important, it may be more effective to include community stories and/or real life examples of how the topic relates to the community.
- If you are requesting a letter of support from a Tribal Leader or would like them to submit a letter to support a specific cause, it is best to have a draft version of the letter handy to give to their staff as a working document. Make sure you inform them that the draft letter is for their reference and modifications are welcomed.

Engaging Tribal Leadership:

- Know your local Tribe(s); know where the tribal lands are located, and if you are in an urban area, know which Tribe(s) is acknowledged to have occupied the land where you or your event (meeting, training etc.) may take place.
- When asking for support, frame your request in the context of how it will help Tribal Youth and the Community.
- Be yourself, with sincerity and transparency, and follow through with each commitment you make verbally, or run the risk of being part of a continuous chain of broken promises and dishonor. Remember to “honor your own words”.

What Not To Do:

Although it is important to know all you can about the history of Tribal people, be careful not to imply that you are an “expert” about a Tribe (especially when speaking to a leader of the Tribe). Remember that much of the published literature about Tribal people was written by non-Natives, so it is improper to correct any Tribal person when they are speaking about Tribal or cultural affairs.

****Information in this section was adapted from the Tribal Star Program.***

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR

The most effective way a citizen can directly influence public policy is to meet with their legislative representative (or his or her staff).

During the Meeting

- Be concise. Keep your remarks short and focused. Make clear exactly what you want the member to do.
- Listen – even if his or her view differs from your own. Don't be confrontational.
- Personalize the issue. Stress why early childhood development and health is important to you.
- Press for a commitment of support. Don't let your legislator evade the issue or change the subject. Ask specifically for his or her position on the issue.
- Don't feel like you have to be an expert. Your concern is what is important. If you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, simply say so. If you have questions, please contact the Hualapai Tribe Regional Partnership Council at (928) 854-8732.

After the Meeting

- Within a week of your meeting, fax or email a note to thank your legislator and/or the staff members for their time (do not use regular mail – it may take too long to get through the security procedures). In the note, remind them of what you discussed in your meeting.
- Provide follow-up information. If your member asked questions, or was particularly interested in one aspect, seize the opportunity to follow up with a letter, fact sheet, phone call, or second meeting.
- Share the knowledge you learned. Be sure to tell First Things First what you learned about your member's position.

SAMPLE ADVOCACY LETTER TO TRIBAL LEADERS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Please use the text below to create your own letter on your own letterhead.

Date: _____

Dear _____:

We need your help at this critical time to encourage the Arizona State Legislature to reconsider plans to divert First Things First dollars to the Arizona General Fund. To ensure the Legislature understands the strong support of early childhood development and health programs and services for the children of the Hualapai Tribe, the Legislature needs to receive a very large volume of emails, faxes, calls and letters showing support for this initiative.

First Things First has accomplished many things for Hualapai and many other Arizona Tribal communities within a short period of time. If not protected, all the accomplishments of the First Things First initiative will be lost. We need lots of letters from everyone – tribal leaders, parents, health directors, health program staff, education program staff, and community members.

You can send a letter to your Legislator by doing the following:

1. Review the Advocacy Kit for more information and use the sample letter to Legislators in the kit to write your own personal letter, and then email or fax it to your legislative representatives.
2. Visit your state representatives when you are in Phoenix or visit their local offices. Follow up with phone calls to get a commitment of support.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact

_____.

Thank you for helping support and protect the interests of our tribal children.

SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS

Please use the text below to create your own letter on your own letterhead.

Date: _____

The Honorable _____

Phoenix, AZ

Fax: (602) _____

Email: _____

Dear Representative/Senator: _____

I am a constituent in your district and I am writing to express my deep concern about the potential that First Things First (FTF) dollars may be under consideration as an easy way to address the state's deficit. First Things First funds are not taken from the General Fund or any other source of existing state revenues, but are added tax revenues that were solely enacted to help support the development of young children. These funds would not be available today if First Things First had not been adopted. Using First Things First funds is asking young children to bail out the state.

First Things First dollars are designed to be distributed based on funding plans created by communities across Arizona, including the Hualapai Tribe area.

Should this proposal become a reality, the Hualapai Tribe and the entire state of Arizona will potentially lose the ability to adequately deliver much needed services to our children. First Things First dollars are funding critical services that have been specifically designed for our community, *by* our community. These programs are designed to reach thousands of children to provide services such as quality childcare and preschool, preventive health screening and outreach, and culturally-based parent education.

On behalf of the children of the Hualapai Tribe and all of Arizona's children, I am respectfully requesting your assistance in protecting First Things First funding. I sincerely ask that any proposal to alter the Voter Protection Act or redirect First Things First dollars be abandoned.

I thank you for all of your efforts to assist local families and all of Arizona's communities. I ask that you help lead the charge to preserve the services and programs offered by First Things First. I would be honored to have you join this effort to protect Early Childhood funding sources and also offer my help in any way that I might be of assistance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at () _____ so that we can work together to create a solid foundation for young children.

Sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

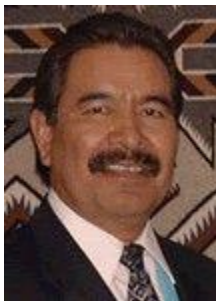
REGIONAL AND STATE LEGISLATORS



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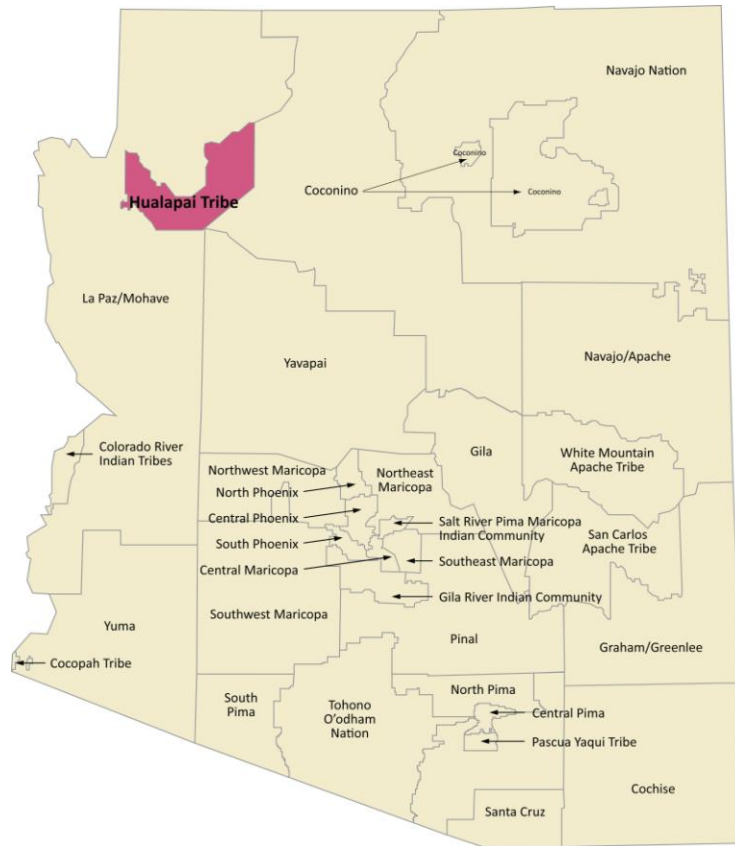
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Hualapai Tribe Regional Partnership Council



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